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SHINA-SPEAKING PEOPLES Speakers of the Shina language are distributed throughout the mountainous regions of the upper Indus River and its tributaries, the Gilgit, lower Hunza, Tangir, Kishenganga, Astor and Dras rivers, an area which is now approximately bisected by the cease-fire line between Pakistan and India. Owing to an ambiguity in the distinction between ethnicity and linguistic affiliation among these people, an accurate estimate of their numbers is difficult to obtain, and census data are unreliable. Shina speakers generally refer to themselves by a geographical designation, such as Gilgitis, Kohistanis, or Drasis, and may not call their language Shina but rather use an adaptation of a geographical designation, such as Kohistyō. On the other hand, not all Shina speakers are Shins, which is a social grouping. There may be between 300,000 and 350,000 Shina speakers in all. Nearly all are Muslim.

The Shina language belongs to the Dardic group of the Indo-Aryan subfamily of the Indo-European family of languages, and the region in which it is spoken has been termed Dardistan by some authors; however, this term suggests a political unity which has never existed.

The entire area is arid or semi-arid, and as the topography is extremely rugged, the population centers are found in the narrow valleys formed by the tributaries of the Indus, where irrigation is possible. The Indus itself is useless for irrigation and a poor communication route, as it flows through a steep rocky gorge between banks of sand deposited by recurrent floods. Many valleys are inaccessible, and most habitations exist as small independent communities, ruled by local councils (*jirgahs*) or minor princes.

In pre-Islamic times the region was an important center of Buddhism. The famous Gilgit Manuscripts were found here, and there are inscriptions in Kharosthi, Sogdian, Prakrit, an undeciphered language which is probably Aramaic,

and old Chinese. There is also evidence that the Indus was a better route of communication during those times. In recent centuries, the aggressive assertion of their autonomy by the tribes living on both sides of the Indus has discouraged travel along this route—a situation prevailing until the opening of the Karakoram Highway in the late 1970s.

Traces of pre-Islamic local beliefs linger on in some areas, among them belief in fairies and demons, as well as shamanism. But the shamans, who formerly belonged to both sexes, are now exclusively male.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many Shina-speaking communities were conquered by the Maharajah of Kashmir and thus came indirectly under British influence. Today, the Shina-speaking communities of the Gilgit, lower Hunza, Tangir-Darel, Astor and Chilas valleys, as well as those in the Indus Kohistan, are under Pakistani administration. India administers the Shina communites in the Kishenganga (or Neelam) drainage: the Gures and Tilel valleys, the Dras plain and the Shina-speaking (Brokskat) communities of Ladakh.

Although Shina is fairly homogeneous throughout the region, eight different dialects can be distinguished, corresponding to the distribution of the Shins themselves—except in Gilgit, where Shina serves as a *lingua franca* for a variety of ethnic groups and castes. The original center of the Shina language is Gilgit, and the Gilgiti dialect is the only one with a standardizing influence. It possesses a body of oral literature, and now there are the beginnings of a written literature; it is also used by Radio Pakistan for its Shina-language broadcasts. Some important isoglosses separate the Gilgiti dialect, along with that of the lower Hunza Valley, from the other Shina dialects. This dialect split implies either a somewhat independent evolution of the Shina language and culture in the Gilgit valley or an early division into two groups of the original Shina speakers. However, the reasons for this are obscure.

The other major dialects of Shina are:

1. *Chilasi and the Kohistani Dialects*. Chilas live below Nanga Parbat on the westward swing of the Indus River. Downriver from Chilas lie the Shina-speaking communities of Jalkot, Palas and Koli, whose inhabitants have an oral tradition that their ancestors migrated there from Chilas. Despite the fact that there is about 70 percent intelligibility between the Kohistani dialects and that of Gilgit, the left-bank Kohistanis consider all the Shina spoken north of Sea (slightly upriver from Jalkot) as a separate language, which they call Sunkyo. They call their own dialects by other names: Kohistyō and Kolichyō. Chilasi and the Kohistani dialects are similar; so, with slight differences, is that of Tangir-Darel, which is the southernmost Shina dialect on the right bank of the Indus. The true linguistic boundary between Gilgiti and the southern dialects may be placed north of Chilas, in the inhospitable foothills of Nanga Parbat.

2. *Astori, Guresi and Drasi*. These three dialects form another grouping, separate from Chilasi and the Kohistani dialects, but agreeing with them in certain points, notably, the formation of the infinitive suffix in *-onu*. The Drasi dialect is the most divergent of the three. Relatively little is known about the linguistic and cultural

patterns of Astor and Guresi, areas which abut on a sensitive political boundary.

3. *Brokskat*. Pockets of Shina speakers are scattered throughout Baltistan and western Ladakh as far as Kargil. A few villages in Ladakh are inhabited by Buddhist Shina speakers. Their Shina has converged with Balti (locally called Purki) to such an extent that it is not intelligible to speakers of other Shina dialects.

Linguistic boundaries are roughly paralleled by sectarian religious boundaries. In Hunza and the Gilgit valley west of Gilgit town, the Ismaili sect predominates. In Gilgit town and the eastern Indus Valley (Baltistan and Ladakh), Shias are more numerous, especially among Baltis and those Shina speakers (Brokpas) who have settled among the Baltis (see Baltis). Astor has a mixed population of Sunnis and Shias. Throughout the southern flank of the Shina area, including Chilas, Kohistan, Gures and Dras, the Sunni sect is greatly in the majority. Chilas, Tangir-Darel and the Kohistan were converted by Sunni *mullahs* from Swat and are the home of the most intense religious conservatism. Sectarian differences between the Gilgitis and their Shina-speaking Sunni neighbors have undoubtedly contributed to the differences in dialect, as they have intensified the isolation between Gilgit and its neighbors (see Kohistanis).

Thus, where Gilgit may be considered a center of the Shina language and associated culture traits, the Indus River and Nanga Parbat massif form natural boundaries within the region which correspond to linguistic and cultural variations. The ethnographic generalizations presented below describe the pattern found in Gilgit and adjoining areas, with some variation occurring in other areas noted, where these are known. Much of the region has not been studied at all, or studied relatively superficially. Since all the ethnographic research has been done by men, little is known about life within the family (a unit to which men have no access). It is unlikely that the Gilgiti cultural pattern prevails throughout the region. In the south, Pushtun (Pathan) influence is strong; in the Indian Shina communities there has been some convergence with patterns typical of the Kashmir Valley (see Pushtun; Kashmiris).

The Shina speakers of Gilgit, the lower Hunza Valley and Tangir-Darel are divided into four communities or castes: Shins, Yeshkuns, Kamins and Doms. The Yeshkuns predominate in the Gilgit and Hunza valleys, Tangir-Darel and Astor and appear to be the original inhabitants of the region. The Shins claim a superior status to the other three groups and are numerically strongest in the southern part of the region: Kohistan, Gures and Dras. This inverse distribution, taken into consideration along with the toponymy (place names) of the upper Gilgit Valley, has suggested to some an encroachment by Shins from the south on the indigenous Yeshkun (or Burusho?) homeland (see Burusho). Preliminary observations of the toponymy of the Sind Valley in Kashmir suggest that on the northern fringes of the Kashmir Valley the Shins themselves may have been displaced by Kashmiri speakers. Migration of ethnic and linguistic groups from

south to north is thus an unproven (and perhaps unprovable) factor—but a likely one—in the linguistic and cultural patchwork of "Dardistan."

Kamins ("workers") are found outside the Shina area, in the Punjab. Their status as a separate sociological grouping, and the occupational castes classified under this term, vary from one area to another. In Gilgit, blacksmiths and potters are inferior to Kamins, but in Kohistan (Palas) the term "Kamin" is used to describe all non-Shins including Yeshkuns, Gujars, blacksmiths, weavers and even Doms (see Gujars). Thus in Palas only a binary sociological division (Shin–Kamin) exists. In the Tilel Valley of the Guresi-speaking area, the entire population is reported to be Shin, and Shins work as blacksmiths, potters, carpenters, barbers and shepherds (unless these are Gujars).

Doms are the musicians; in Gilgit they also work as blacksmiths. In Gilgit they play musical instruments—kettledrums, drums, clarinets and flutes—but do not sing. In Kohistan, they used to sing and dance as well but have been prohibited from practicing their arts by the *mullahs*. There are no Doms in the Tilel Valley. Where Doms still practice their traditional profession, their performances are an essential feature of weddings, polo matches or official tours by dignitaries of all sorts. A fondness for music and dancing is characteristic of the Shina-speaking people, and all the traditional festivals (winter solstice, spring, harvest and sowing) have special songs to be sung in connection with them.

The Doms of Gilgit and Hunza-Nager have their own language, Dumaki, which is not Dardic but belongs to the Central Indo-Aryan group of the South Asian plains. Both Doms and Kamins appear to have migrated into the area from the south.

The economy is based on farming and herding. In the broader valleys, which can accommodate a year-round sedentary population, most of the valley land is terraced and irrigated, and maize, wheat and barley are grown. Some rice, millet and various kinds of legumes are also cultivated, along with vegetables (potatoes, tomatoes, onions and squashes). Horticulture is a specialty of these valleys which produce apricots, apples, grapes and nuts for home consumption and cash crops. The opening of the Karakoram Highway in Pakistan has recently improved the marketability of nuts and dried fruit in that country. The Indian valleys are located off the major communication routes and have less access to markets.

Goats, sheep, buffalo and cows are raised throughout the region and are taken by shepherds to higher mountain pastures to graze during the summer. In the Gilgit, Hunza and Astor valleys, ponies are raised for the popular sport of polo, but the horse is a prestige animal, and it is the buffalo which is the common beast of burden for plowing. Nineteenth-century explorers observed that the Shins considered the cow and its products polluting; only traces of this ancient taboo remain. Traces of its counterpart are to be found in the attribution of supernatural powers to wild goats (ibor and markhor) and the custom of embellishing the gate and veranda of the residence of a local ruler or important religious leader by the horns of a markhor.

In the steep-sided valleys of the Indus, agriculture and herding are combined

in a finely balanced transhumance cycle. At the end of April the community prepares to shift from the lowest elevations, near the rivers, to cultivated fields at median elevations. The cattle and goats are sent ahead with shepherds or tenants to manure the fields. After these fields are sown with maize, the population shifts again to still higher elevations, where barley and vegetables are grown. The months of July and August are spent in the highest mountain pastures, which, because of their location, serve as meeting places for people from dispersed settlements throughout the valley. The high mountain pastures are considered by these people as the most suitable environment for the composition of poetry in the Shina language. In the autumn, the migration process is reversed, with the livestock being brought down by stages after the harvesting at each elevation has been completed.

The extended family and the village are the basic sociological units. Villages usually consist of dispersed hamlets, which tend to be inhabited by people of the same patrilineal descent group. In Gilgit, hamlets are further subdivided into *phari* (neighborhoods or wards). Within the hamlet or ward, women generally do not wear the full veil but only a head shawl, which does not hinder performance of tasks outside the house walls, such as fetching water and firewood, weeding crops and washing pots and clothes in the irrigation channel. As marriages tend to be endogamous, women often stay near their natal home after marriage.

In some remote valleys, villages are constructed as fortresses, with walled perimeters and towers. Fortress-towers are also built in dispersed settlements in the Kohistan when a blood feud occurs. In this case the aggrieved party ceases to till his fields, takes refuge in his tower and, armed with guns and binoculars, waits for his enemy to attack. This strategy is available only to prosperous men; poorer men must either flee or seek asylum with some rival party. The most frequent causes of feuds are adultery and infliction of physical injury or murder. Feuds are more common in Chilas, Tangir-Darel and the Kohistan, where Pushtun influence is strongest, than in Gilgit or the Indian valleys. In Gilgit, fines are more commonly imposed. Associated with factionalism and local warfare is a tendency to establish alliances between localities through marriages of exchange; for example, in Kohistan between Palas and Jalkot valleys and in Tangir-Darel between Tangir and Darel.

Most Shina speakers are in the process of acculturation, at least to some extent, to the dominant patterns of Pakistan or India. Urdu has become the carrier language throughout most of the region, and most men (but not women) are bilingual. Trilingualism (Shina-Urdu-Pakhto or Shina-Urdu-Kashmiri) is not uncommon.

With the construction of the Karakoram Highway, the Indus has again become the best route of communication from the South Asian subcontinent to China, through the core of the Shina-speaking territory. Shina speakers are being integrated into wider economic networks, as well as gaining access to expanded health and educational facilities. In both Pakistan and India, research in the last few years has sought to answer questions about the Shina language as well as

about the social structure, religious beliefs and history of its speakers. In India, a government-sponsored project has begun to provide Shina-speaking children primary textbooks in their own language. Thus, after many centuries of isolation, Shina speakers have again begun to participate in the wider economic and cultural spheres of the South Asian subcontinent.

(The author wishes to express her gratitude to Professor Georg Buddress of Johannes-Gutenberg University, Mainz, West Germany, for reading the unpublished manuscript, correcting errors and providing additional information about the Shina speakers of Gilgit and Tangir-Darel. Any inaccuracies which may remain are the sole responsibility of the author.)

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SINDHIS As the mighty Indus, one of the major rivers of the world, winds its way southward from the ranges of the high Himalayas to the Arabian Sea, it leaves Pakistan's Punjab Province and at its northern end enters the province of Sind, homeland for more than 11 million Sindhis. The Indus, the ancient name of which—Sindhu—is where the name "Sind" comes from, flows south, dividing the province into two almost equal expanses of fertile land

Approximately 93 percent (about 10.6 million) of the Sindhis in Pakistan are Muslim. Perhaps 65,000 Sindhi Muslims live in India, although before Partition in 1947 the number was much higher. After Partition, thousands migrated to Pakistan, where they are called *muhajir*. Other Sindhis live and work in the oil-related industries of the Persian Gulf.

Most Sindhi Muslims are descendants of people who have lived in the Sind Province for centuries. These Sindhis are called *pukka*, meaning "real," and are descendants of such central Asian groups as the Sakas, Kushans and Huns as well as the many Rajput and Jat tribes of eastern India, such as the Yadavs and Parwars. In Sind, descendants of the Yadavs are known locally as Sammas, and those of the Parwars are called Sumras and include such tribes as the Bhuttos, the Bhattis, the Lohanos and the Mohanos. Some ethnologists have combined the two names of Sammas and Sumras into Sammat to refer to those Sindhis with indigenous origins. The Mohanos, thought to be among the oldest inhabitants of Sind, concentrate on the rivers and lakes, especially Lake Manchar in Dadu District and in the Indus River delta, where their primary occupations are fishing and ferrying.

There are two other ethnic strains in the Sindhi Muslim population. Some Sindhi Muslims trace their origins to Arab conquerors who came in A.D. 711, the first to bring Islam to the subcontinent, and to subsequent waves of invaders including Persians, Turks, Moghuls and Pushtun (Pathans). By and large these groups have long since mingled and intermarried with the local population and thus are indistinguishable except for some, such as the Sayyid families, who claim direct descent from the Prophet Muhammad, and the Pushtun families of northwestern Sind. The other strain is that of the Baluch, who, attracted by the fertile land of the Indus Valley, have been coming for 500 years from neighboring Baluchistan (see Baluch). Those who settled on the west bank of the Indus, such as the Chandios, the Jamalis and the Khosos, have managed to keep their Baluch identity, but those who settled on the east bank, such as the Jatois and the Talpurs (former rulers of Sind), have largely been "Sindhi-ized" and now speak Sindhi as a mother tongue.

In addition to these main strains that constitute the majority of Sindhi Muslims, there are some minor but influential groups, namely the trading communities of the Memons, the Bohras and the Khojas (including Ismailis). Of these the Memons (Sunni, as opposed to the other two, both Shia) are perhaps the most Sindhi (although at one time the Ismailis were a dominant presence). Their capital was Thatta until the mid-1500s, when it was destroyed by the Portuguese and the Memons were dispersed mainly to Gujarat and Saurshastra in India. Not all left at the time, so that in addition to those who have returned since 1947 (among whom was Mohammed Ali Jinnah, a Khoja and founder of Pakistan), many Sindhi-speaking Memons can be found in the towns and villages of Sind.

The uncertain origins of the Sindhi language have led to conflicting arguments